

*Opening Address by H.E. Prof. Afework Kassu, State Minister, Ministry of Science & Higher Education at North Eastern Africa Workshop Series on the Roles of Science in Assisting Regional Policy Development*

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- Prof. Tsige Gebre-Mariam, President of Ethiopian Academic of Sciences
- Prof. Masresha Fetene, Executive Director of Ethiopian Academy of Sciences
- Government Officials,
- Distinguished participants,
- Colleagues from East African Countries
- Ladies and Gentlemen,

On behalf of Ministry of Science and Higher Education of the FDRE, it gives me great pleasure to welcome you to this significant workshop on “*Roles of Science in Assisting Regional Policy Development*” and give welcoming remarks to this panel of policy makers and researchers.

Science advice in simple terms is using scientific knowledge to aid decisions made at various levels across different sectors. The use of evidence in decision making processes is becoming increasingly important, be it for routine decision making or finding solutions for complex problems. Societies are faced with several challenges that cannot be pinned to one underlying cause. Governments are thus faced with challenges that require multi-faceted approach to identify effective interventions. This is where evidence-based decision and recommendation comes in.

**Science advice experience in Ethiopia**

Ethiopia has experience in science advice although in a fragmented and/or on demand request by the government.

Researches designed by researchers and graduate students have little or no influence in informing policies of the government as most of them are either not linked with evidences needed by Government or sectoral ministries or are designed to address only academic questions.

Some sectors in Ethiopia, however, make use of scientific evidence more so than other sectors. The Ministry of Health, Ministry of Agriculture, Ministry of Education, Ministry Science and Higher Education, Ministry of Innovation and Technology etc are few examples. Very good recent examples are bio-refinery roadmap, biotechnology roadmap, education and training development roadmap study, technology roadmaps in 24 sectors, etc all of which have been developed eminent scientists, researchers and practitioners of the country and submitted to Government. There are studies conducted which have contributed to re-consideration of the conventionally used first-line treatment used for specific health interventions.

Dear Participants,

A critical component of delivering science advice is the who and how involved in the process. The following issues are worth considering in provision of evidence to inform policy-making:

- How does one give unsolicited science advice to the government?
- How should policy makers be sensitized to be receptive to evidence-based policy making?

- What kind of a national system or channel should be instituted that makes use of scientific evidence for decision making?

### **MoSHE's endeavours**

Allow me to briefly describe to you the endeavours of my Ministry in this regard. The Ministry of Science and Higher Education has formed an *advisory committee* to guide the work of the Ministry following its re-structure. As part of the overall reform of the country, the Ministry is also engaged in numerous strategies to modernize and develop the science and higher education system of Ethiopia. To this end, MoSHE is continually seeking advice and consultation from experts and institutions.

### **EAS's role**

Science academies can play a pivotal role in delivering timely evidence to governments. The Ethiopian Academy of Sciences, in particular, is well-placed to provide evidence to the government that can inform policy. The fact that EAS has a wide pool of expertise in varied disciplines puts the Academy in a unique position to provide advice in any sector required by the government. The diversity of expertise that the Academy possesses lends its part to ensuring that evidence generated emanates from diverse disciplines which benefit in tackling the complexities of today's societal challenges. This will in the long run pave the way for engagement in interdisciplinary research to address problems.

The Ethiopian Academy of Sciences is an ally to my Ministry and also been producing proceedings, policy briefs and declarations that have far reaching implication not only for the development of science in Ethiopia but also for impacting policies and strategies.

MoSHE encourages the EAS to continue to deliver quality evidence to inform policies and decisions.

Dear Participants,

The agenda outlined for this workshop is very comprehensive and enriching. In the audience we have the best scientists from home and abroad, practitioners and policy makers. This is a unique ***opportunity for all of us to address some of the challenges*** beyond the opportunities and lesson learnt on evidence informed policy making in Africa.

It is also my hope that proceedings of the workshop will be published and made available for the vast majority of stakeholders so that those who did not get the opportunity to attend this event can benefit from the proceedings.

On behalf of the Ministry of Science and Higher Education which is mandated to lead the development of Science in Ethiopia, I would like to **assure you of the continued support of my Ministry** in your future collaborative endeavors in promoting the importance of evidence based policy/decision making which would raise the importance of science to a higher level.

On a special note, I would like to commend the Ethiopian Academy of Sciences and the International Network for Government Science advice for co-hosting this very important and timely workshop. I urge all policy makers that are here today to share your experiences and take from the workshop to your counterparts.

I wish you fruitful deliberations.

**Thank you**